Clean Colorado River Alliance
Meeting Notes
October 21, 2005
Phoenix, Arizona

Clean Colorado River Alliance Mission
Develop recommendations to address existing water quality issues to ensure Colorado River water quality meets the needs of Arizona, now and in the future.

Attendees

Dean Barlow, Lake Havasu Parks Board
Aubrey Baure, U.S. Air Force / Department of Defense REC 9
Kathy Carroll, City of Yuma
Susan Craig, Arizona Department of Environmental Quality
Peter Culp, Sonoran Institute
V.C. Danos, Arizona Municipal Water Users Association
Susan Fitch, Arizona Department of Environmental Quality
Susanna Hitchcock, City of Yuma
Kirk Koch, Bureau of Land Management Colorado River District
Marie Light, City of Tucson Water Department
Hsin-I Lin, Arizona Department of Health Services
Patty Mead, Mohave County Department of Public Health
Rachel Patterson, Mohave County Department of Public Health
Robert Shuler, Ryley, Carlock & Applewhite
Carlos Sierra, Staff Assistant, Office of U.S. Senator John McCain
Jeffery Smith, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, Lower Colorado River – HAZMAT
Drew Swieckowski, Arizona Department of Water Resources
Linda Taunt, Arizona Department of Environmental Quality
David Weedman, Arizona Game and Fish Department
Bill Werner, Arizona Department of Water Resources
Doyle Wilson, Lake Havasu City

Welcome and Introductions

Linda Taunt - Section Manager, ADEQ

- Welcome and introductions
- Discussion on purpose of meeting - Discuss the metals report, recommendations to the Governor, regional approach, and next steps
- Presentation on status of CCRA Report -
    - October 12th - comments were due on the draft CCRA Report to appropriate workgroup lead and/or Susan Craig for the Executive Summary and Introduction
    - October 28th - workgroup leads send complete draft workgroup report to Susan Craig - she will compile the reports, finish the executive summary and write conclusion

- Complete draft CCRA Report distributed for review by Alliance on November 2nd - comments due back November 10th

Metals Pollutant Workgroup Report

Susan Craig - Watershed Supervisor, ADEQ (facilitator)

Discussion on metals issues and how to deal with the so far absent piece of the report -

- Metals were second highest ranking pollutant group when the Alliance voted in June
- Segments currently listed as impaired due to metals include Colorado River from Hoover Dam to Lake Mohave for selenium and Gila River from Coyote Wash to Fortuna Wash for boron
- Identified issues: Chromium VI at Lake Havasu City (McCullough) and from PG&E (Needles, CA) (both are currently being addressed), selenium, mercury, and uranium tailings pile near Moab
- Main Outlet Drain Extension (MODE) contains salts, selenium, and pesticides but it does not reach the river - it goes to Mexico and on down to the Cienega
- On-going study in Mexico on water quality of various source waters
- Mercury in Alamo Lake from mining in the Bill Williams Watershed
- Selenium passing thru system from Mancos shale - attempts to reduce salinity have an added benefit of reducing selenium
- Selenium is a basin-wide issue
- No immediate threats other than known sources - uranium tailings pile in Moab, Chromium VI from old manufacturing plant in Lake Havasu City (McCullough) and recent discovery at California PG&E plant near Needles, and mining in the Bill Williams Watershed

Results

- A metals report will be drafted to include selenium, chromium, mercury, and uranium
- The workgroup will consist of Peter Culp (uranium), Doyle Wilson (chromium), Linda Taunt (uranium), Susan Fitch (mercury), Bill Werner (selenium), and Kirk Koch (reviewer)

Work Session

Pollutant Workgroups

The group was divided into pollutant workgroups and spent approximately 30 minutes discussing phase two of the report, recommended solutions and action plan for implementation and funding.

Workgroup Reports

After the work session, a representative from each workgroup presented the results followed by discussion/feedback from the Alliance. The results of the work session (recommendations for implementation and funding identified by each pollutant workgroup) are identified below.

Endocrine disrupting compounds

Many unknowns regarding endocrine disrupting compounds - before recommendations are developed, additional information is needed

Recommendations -

- Characterize occurrence on river
- Perform studies on impacts to humans and wildlife
- Concentrations in water, synergistic impacts; impacts to recreational uses and to endangered species
- Develop above/below sampling strategy to see if there are sources (waste water treatment plants)
- Determine compounds of interest - approx. 24 compounds are concerning
- Summarize studies to date on impacts to wildlife (Lake Mead Task Force)

Funding -

EPA, Center for Disease Control, Colorado River Regional Sewer Coalition (CRSSCO), Metropolitan Water District (CA), Southern Nevada Water Authority, municipal providers (humans), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Wildlife Conservation Fund, Heritage Grant Funds, EPA (wildlife)

Note - Kathy Carroll provided a copy of a presentation from a WESTCAS conference on Pharmaceuticals/Personal Care Products and endocrine disrupting compounds.

Salinity/TDS

Recommendations -

- Continued support for Title II Salinity Control Acts/projects
- Continued state participation on Forum/Advisory Council to include both water resources and water quality
- Ensure AZPDES/NPDES permits are consistent with Forum policies

Funding -

No additional funding needed at this time

Bacteria

Recommendations -

- Monitoring groups provide data to one place (ADEQ) as central depository - ADEQ then can provide all data to interested parties
- ADEQ must provide support to local jurisdictions in passing laws/ordinances on sewering
- Installation of sanitary/trash facilities in recreational areas along the river - may require funding for both capital investment and facility maintenance
- Educational programs to children and public – public service announcements, presentations to service organizations, councils, and chambers

Funding -

- Legacy funding could be used for staff for education

- State Lake Improvement Fund
- Water Quality Improvement Grant Program

Nutrients

Recommendations -

- Continue sewering communities along the river
- Identify wastewater improvement projects along the river (e.g., aging or inefficient systems, collection systems)
- Consider developing an "assured wastewater standard" dealing with capacity, quality of effluent, and disposal
- Review how nitrogen can be effectively used throughout the area (e.g., golf courses, agriculture, etc.)
- Identify areas of wastewater needs and prioritize them for implementation

Funding -

- Water Infrastructure Finance Authority
- U.S. Department of Agriculture
- Rural Development Assistance
- Metropolitan Water District

Note - Discussion on existing regulatory processes dealing with growth and possible improvements to them – Clean Water Act 208 program

Sediment

Recommendations -

- Urban runoff/construction/development -
    - Reduce sediment in new development through design, regulatory and structural controls and pollution prevention strategies
    - Control runoff from existing urban areas
    - Public education and outreach - volunteer efforts
    - Regulation primarily through stormwater program - stormwater pollution prevention plans and use of stormwater best management practices
- Agriculture - reduce sediment through improvements to grazing methods and use of best management practices
- Wildfire -
    - Continue to support changes to national forest management policies - reduce occurrences of catastrophic wildfires
    - Continue funding to U.S. Forest Service and Natural Resource Conservation Service to provide prompt response to wildfires to control erosion and sedimentation
- Off-road vehicles -
    - Work with state, federal and local land management entities to reduce/regulate use of off-road vehicles (recommendation would require funding to implement regulation)

Funding -

- Water Protection Fund
- Water Quality Improvement Grant
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (USDA)

Note - Discussion and agreement that regulation of dams (especially Alamo Lake) can provide large amounts of sediment to main stem of the river. In the case of Alamo Dam, it may create a localized issue at Lake Havasu. There are significant sediment issues in impacted areas.

Perchlorate

Recommendations -

Current efforts by private industry, federal, state, universities have been sufficient and should continue

Funding -

No need for additional funding - stay the course

Regional Approach

Susan Craig - Watershed Supervisor, ADEQ (facilitator)

The Alliance divided into three small groups to discuss a vision for a regional framework. One objective of the Clean Colorado River Alliance is to "develop a plan to create a regional approach to address Colorado River water quality issues." The ideas from each group are identified below.

Group One -

- Identify existing water quality organizations and interested parties - create stakeholder forum including: academia, citizen groups, agriculture, environmental organizations, Mexico, recreational user groups, irrigation districts, tribes, cities, counties, state and federal agencies, and industry
- Identify common broad-scale issues
- Continue Border 21 Initiative
- Identify common areas, issues and activities relative to water quality - especially in areas of funding and overlap
- Determine if current monitoring is adequate - need to share existing data, information, and studies
- Coordinate past studies, surveys, etc. to track changes/trends
- Act on opportunities for a common approach

Group Two

- Provide state leadership (ADEQ) to convene regional planning for water quality around key issues (growth pressures) with support and funding
- Identify which issues are adequately addressed by existing institutions (perchlorate, uranium tailings, and chromium VI are currently being addressed)

- Convene stakeholders on a regular basis to discuss developments, share information, and identify concerns
- Identify locally-specific issues and convene interested parties around them (a sub-regional effort of common interests)

Group Three

- Continue follow-up with Clean Colorado River Alliance one to two times per year
- Gather key regional players for regional meetings
- Pattern organization of group after Multiple Species Conservation Plan - deals with the biological, physical and chemical integrity of the river system

Next Steps

Susan Craig - Watershed Supervisor, ADEQ

- Include personal quotes from Alliance members in the CCRA Report - one or two quotes for each pollutant chapter - send to Susan Craig
- October 28th - workgroup leads send complete draft pollutant workgroup report to Susan Craig
- Susan Craig- compile reports, finish executive summary and draft conclusions section (using the regional approach suggestions from meeting)
- ADEQ's Communications Office - read and edit the CCRA Report
- November 2nd - complete draft CCRA Report distributed for review by Alliance - comments are due back on November 10th
- Next meeting - tentatively scheduled for November 18th in Yuma.

Adjourn